ITALIAN SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS STUDENTS' ACCENTED SPEECH. A CASE STUDY IN TUSCANY

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1. INTRODUCTION[4]

In September 2018, the master of a prestigious Italian school with a high percentage of students with Chinese background imposed a strict monolingual rule on the entire school[5]. Students, from nursery to high school, were forced to speak only Italian, not only in the classroom, but also in the corridors, in the canteen, and during play and recreation. The decision was well received both by the press and by the society at large. Some months later, a teacher from a classical high school in Southern Italy, in a newspaper interview, affirmed that disadvantaged children do not set a goal of being linguistically correct on themselves[6]. According to her, this lack of motivation is amplified by the teachers themselves, because they persist in using the local dialect in speaking with children; teachers are not very responsible in their activities and they are doing enormous damage to the children. Again, nobody complained about the teacher's monolingual opinion.

Both anecdotes clearly show the strong pervasiveness, in Italy, of the standard language ideology (Lippi Green, 1997), according to which standard ways of speaking are considered official and correct, whereas other varieties are disregarded as incorrect, and subordinated to the more prestigious forms. Italian school teachers appear to have a monolingual mindset (Clyne, 2008) that condemns non-standard and non-national languages to invisibility and that, indirectly, can be a serious threat for the so-called culturally and linguistically diverse people (CALD). As observed in recent studies on linguistic racism (see Dovchin, 2020a) mechanisms in language discrimination and racialization are subtle. They recall the 'aversive racism', a form of discrimination that «operates unconsciously in subtle and indirect ways» and is practised by individuals who «regard themselves as nonprejudiced but, at the same time, harbor negative feelings and beliefs about members of minority groups» (Gaertner, Dovidio, 2007: 2). However, the consequences are shattering, and linguistic discrimination has direct consequences on the well-being of the individuals (Kim, Wang, Deng, Alvarez, Li, 2011; Dovchin, 2020b). Thus, studying linguistic discrimination and bias toward languages and non-standard

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[5] https://www.corriere.it/cronache/19_aprile_08/annalisa-tre-compagni-cinesi-vincono-concorso-matematica-prato-integrazione-90efa1f2-5a37-11e9-9773-c990cfb7393b.shtml.

[6] https://www.corriere.it/scuola/secondaria/19_luglio_10/io-professoressa-sud-studenti-abituati-comunicare-dialetto-616b7f6c-a340-11e9-a4d9-199f0357bdd6.shtml.

accents appears to be extremely urgent in order to allow for a real and inclusive anti-racist pedagogy.

In this paper we report the results of an exploratory survey conducted in three Italian cities, aiming at collecting opinions toward multiculturalism and multilingual education at school, and focussing on teachers' ideology towards foreign accents. The broader scope of the research project is to investigate the mechanisms of accent discrimination, especially when a foreign accent is associated with ethnic minorities, in contexts of superdiverse cities (Vertovec, 2007). Italy is the ideal country in which to carry out this research in that it is nowadays rich in language diversity and yet very little is known about language attitudes and stereotypes. Moreover, it might represent a testing ground for all the general conclusions reached in papers which mostly focus on English-speaking countries. Therefore, we want to explore whether in different schools with inhomogeneous rates of non-Italian students, teachers show different attitudes towards foreign accent. Indeed, we believe that standard language ideology is deeply rooted in the Italian school system, thus we do not expect to find that exposure to Italian linguistic diversity will affect our results.

The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, we detail Italian school composition in relationship to recent migratory waves, and Italian school policies about multilingualism and multiculturalism; secondly, we offer a theoretical background on language attitudes and teachers' beliefs about non-standard accent; then, we report on the experimental design and the results of our fieldwork research in several Italian schools; finally we discuss our findings in the light of the international literature and of the relationship to Italy's peculiar sociolinguistic situation.

2. MIGRATION, ITALIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

Immigration in Italy reached a significant size in the 1970s, but it became a characterising aspect of Italian demography at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Colombo, Sciortino, 2004). Whereas in the Eighties the presence of pupils with foreign citizenship[7] was slight, from the early 2000s to the school year 2012-13 about 670,000 pupils with foreign citizenship entered the Italian school system (MIUR, 2018a). Because of this constant increase in the percentage of children with immigrant origin, pupils with non-Italian citizenship represent the dynamic aspect of the Italian school system, reshaping the Italian educational system toward multi-ethnic and multicultural scenarios. In particular it is the upper secondary level[8] of the Italian secondary school system which is the segment that has changed the most: in the school year 2016-17, students with non-Italian citizenship numbered about 192,000, with an increase of 2.21% over the previous year (MIUR, 2018b).

[7] Italian nationality law follows *Jus sanguinis* and implies that any child born to an Italian citizen parent is ordinarily born an Italian citizen. Conversely, children born to foreign parents on Italian soil do not automatically acquire Italian citizenship, but they have the right to apply for it before reaching the age of 18. Foreign citizens who have been legally resident in Italy for at least ten years can acquire Italian citizenship too.

[8] Italian education system is organized in three cycles: primary school (grammar or elementary school, It. 'scuola primaria or 'scuola elementare', from age 6 to 11), lower secondary schools (middle school, e.g. It. 'scuola secondaria di primo grado' or 'scuola media', three years from age 11 to 14) and upper secondary school (high school, e.g. It. 'scuola secondaria di secondo grado' or 'scuola superiore', five years from age 14 to 19). Schooling is compulsory until the age of 16.

Given this picture, Italian school classrooms are becoming more like, e.g., North American or English classrooms, where English language learners are now considered to be the new mainstream (Enright, 2011). That is, people enrolled in school are no longer expected to be monolingual native speakers speaking the dominant language of the country, but, conversely, speakers with diverse linguistic repertoires. For that matter, at least half of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual, and people grow up speaking two or more languages (Grosjean, 2010). A typical scenario for a primary school classroom in Italy today will include: Italian native speakers; second generation monolingual speakers who later, with the learning of Italian, will become early sequential bilinguals; early simultaneous bilinguals who start speaking Italian in nursery school and the mother tongue at home; second generation children who will be forced by their parents, or by their educators, to speak only Italian at home; first generation, born abroad students with different levels in their L1 competence because some of them arrived in Italy after a formal training in their L1, others were not educated in their country of origin, others would speak a non-standard / vernacular variety at home but received a formal training in the standard variety (as in the case of Chinese or Arabian students), or, lastly, have been schooled in a European language (as in the case of English for Ghanaian and Filipino students with high socioeconomic status) (cf. Favaro, 2012).

Italian school teachers, conversely, can still be considered a homogeneous group of predominantly white, Italian monolingual speakers. Additionally, they do not receive specific training to tackle the challenges of teaching in a multicultural educational environment (OECD, 2014; Triventi, 2019). Probably, this lack of training is one of the reasons why the demographical change in Italian schools was not positively and consistently welcomed by teachers. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics 2015 statistics report (ISTAT, 2016: 14), indeed, the high rates of foreign students in the classroom are commonly viewed by teachers as a source of problems: non-Italian students, especially Chinese, Pakistani and Bengali students were considered troublesome. Albeit declaring an increased awareness for the integration of non-Italian students, many teachers still state that they need to adapt their teaching methods, and that other steps are needed for a full and positive integration. Children with non-Italian citizenship show indeed poor academic performances and tend to be enrolled in lower grade classes with respect to their age group (Azzolini, 2011). Failure rates at school (e.g. students repeating a year) show that 31.3% of students with non-Italian citizenship are not on track, whereas the percentage for Italian students is 10%. The gap is more significant in lower secondary schools, where the percentage reaches 59.1%, three times the percentage for Italian students' failure rates (20.9%). In addition to this, drop-out rates show the same inequality between the two school populations. During the first two school cycles, pupils with non-Italian citizenship show the same attendance rate as pupils with Italian citizenship (about 100%). However, at the age of 17 and 18, during the last two years of high school, the attendance rate of pupils with non-Italian citizenship decreases steadily (64.8%, in opposition to 80.9% of pupils with Italian citizenship). The abrupt interruption in school attendance prevents, therefore, about 35% of pupils with non-Italian citizenship from completing their studies. It has been demonstrated that this failure can be caused, unintentionally, by teachers themselves. Indeed, comparing the results of standardized anonymous tests with teachers' grades in two subjects (i.e. Italian language and mathematics) it has been found that teachers' biases cause an under-evaluation of students with an immigrant background (Triventi, 2019).

3. ITALIAN LANGUAGE POLICIES FOR A MULTILINGUAL CURRICULUM

In several European countries, teachers' education curricula and school reforms have focused more on multiculturalism than on linguistic diversity and explicit training devoted to multilingualism, notwithstanding the European Commission's recommendation[9] (De Jong, Harper, 2005). This holds particularly true for Italy if we consider that it still lacks an adequate proposal in establishing specific language policies for the linguistic integration of pupils of foreign origins at school. Indeed, the copious laws and decrees since the Nineties have worked more as guidelines and suggestions for teachers and headmasters, rather than providing them with specific protocols. The 1998 Turco-Napolitano law (6 March 1998, n. 40), concerning the regulation of migrations, affirms that the school community welcomes linguistic and cultural differences as a quality for mutual respect, and exchange between cultures and tolerance. According to this law, the school community favours activities for the safeguard of the culture and language of origin even through the collection for school libraries of books, journals and audio-visual material in the language of the countries of origin of the foreigners residing in Italy.

A document published by the Ministry of Education in 2007, *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri* ('The Italian path for a multicultural school and for the integration of foreign students')[10], highlights the dynamic aspect of the Italian school system as a direct consequence of the radical transformation caused by migrations, and pinpoints different actions for integration. Among these, effort must be expended on Italian language acquisition and learning, through workshops, educational support and the presence of educational facilitators, but, in addition to this, the school needs to promote and encourage multilingualism. According to the aforementioned document, this can be achieved through two strategies: one devoted to the promotion of multilingualism at school, with the possibility of including the teaching of the languages spoken by the most numerous communities[11]; the other, devoted to individual multilingualism, with the maintenance of the language of origin and its promotion in the classroom. The teaching of languages of origin, in their standard version, can be organized together with foreign groups and associations in Italy, whereas the families and the communities will expose their children to the non-standard varieties they speak at home (MIUR, 2007).

Thus, Italy appears to be experiencing "linguistic schizophrenia" (Machetti, Barni, Bagna, 2018): while official documents emphasise the role of multilingualism, there is a lack of support in language policies and planning regarding migrants and immigrant languages (for an in-depth analysis see Barni, 2012). These documents normally suggest best practices and promote maintaining community languages, but in effect the Italian school system is still firmly monolingual, with its only purpose as that of preserving the Italian language without considering linguistic diversity as a real possibility for enrichment. The inadequacy of resources and specific training for teachers are directly correlated with the absence of a clear protocol for the recognition and support of immigrant languages in secondary schools.

Teachers should be completely aware of their role in, possibly, amplifying inequalities

[9] According to the European Commission (2007: 6), multilingualism is to be intended as «the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives».

[10] https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/news/2007/allegati/pubblicazione_intercultura.pdf.

[11] In the Italian lower secondary schools, in addition to English, the teaching of another Community language (Spanish, French, German) is compulsory, thus promoting multilingualism through the early exposure to two community languages, in addition to the national standard language (Mezzadri, 2016).

in the multilingual and multicultural classrooms. For this reason, research in the field of language education and in the training of new teachers cohort calls explicitly for a genuine variationist approach that considers the complexity and intertwining of the linguistic repertoires of the students (Favaro, 2012). Teachers do not need to develop pedagogical content knowledge about language, but they do need to reach a pedagogical language knowledge deeply rooted in sociolinguistics, in order to understand that students' language might deviate from "native-like" or "standard" language, without being considered flawed or inappropriate for particular communicative activities (Bunch, 2013: 304). Given such a framework, teachers' linguistic attitudes play a relevant role, as will be shown in the following section.

4. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND TEACHERS' BELIEFS

Within a classroom, teachers' judgements might be biased by the deviation from the linguistic standard; such deviations might interfere with students' language proficiency, their school success, and motivation (Delpit, 2002; De Jong, Harper, 2005). Biases are usually determined by teachers' attitudes toward language(s), that is, the sum of beliefs, prejudices, associations, and opinions towards a language (Garrett, 2010)[12]. Attitudes and beliefs are deeply related, since a belief is what is held to be true or real by a person, according to the individual subjective judgments concerning some aspect of self or of the world (Fishbein, Ajzen, 1975). From a linguistic perspective, this implies believing in myths about language: e.g., some languages are not good enough, have no grammar or are more incorrect than others; some languages are ugly whereas others are beautiful, some other languages are spoken faster than others, and so forth (Bauer, Trudgill, 2019).

Attitudes and beliefs also regard accent, and the way people speak. Negative attitudes towards accented speech assume that people speaking with an accent are not proficient or sufficiently fluent in the language, regardless of their real competence, or that their accented way of speaking is the consequence of a lack of willingness in mastering the target language, in the case of speakers with an immigrant background (Weiner, Perry, Magnusson, 1988; Boyd, 2003). Crucially, attitudes towards non-standard accents are one of the causes of bias in the evaluation of children, and pupils' evaluations are the direct consequences of this (Williams, 1976; Edwards, 1979; Frender, Brown, Lambert, 1970; Seligman, Tucker, Lambert, 1972; Giles, Hewstone, Ball, 1983; Cross, DeVaney, Jones, 2001). Teachers with negative attitudes toward non-standard accents might judge pupils that speak with an accent as less capable of achieving a good performance, and thus they give them lower grades. This, normally, leads pupils to feel less valued and discourages them from putting the hard effort into studying, generating, at the end, a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal, Jacobson, 1968; Gluszek, Dovidio, 2010; Russo, Gazi, Koyuncu, 2017). When negative attitudes refer to LX speakers of a language[13], it is obvious that an attitude that disfavours foreign-accented speech will cause stereotypical threats, and that LX speakers will suffer from judgements that will remind them that they are not as

[12] From the definition of Allport (1935: 810) that identifies an attitude as a «mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related», several definitions of attitudes have been proposed (see the overview in Banaji, Heiphetz, 2010). Given the scope of the paper, we prefer to adopt a broader definition, such as the one cited in the text.

[13] We use the term LX user, following the proposal of DeWaele (2018). The term LX user refers to foreign language speakers who have acquired the other languages(s) after the age at which the first language(s) was acquired, that is after 3 years from birth.

competent as a L1 speaker (cf. Paladino, Poddesu, Rauzi, Vaes, Cadinu, Forer, 2009). LX speakers can indeed suffer from "linguistic stereotyping", and teachers can have negative fixed perceptions and judgments based on students' race, ethnicity, and nationality (Dovchin, 2020b).

Language attitudes are strictly related to language ideologies, defined by Gal (2006: 163) as «those cultural presuppositions and metalinguistic notions that name, frame and evaluate linguistic practices, linking them to the political, moral and aesthetic positions of the speakers, and to the institutions that support those positions and practices». Since teachers are seen in the school institution as the privileged authorities on language and correctness, they appear to be the leading cohort of the standard language ideology, a set of beliefs that implies that standard varieties are logically, stylistically, and even morally superior to stigmatized dialects (Milroy, 2002). Consequently, a specific awareness is needed to break the «strong connections between teachers' negative attitudes about stigmatized dialects, lower teacher expectations for students who speak them, and thus lower academic achievement on the part of students» (Godley *et al.*, 2006: 31). In order to do so, assessing teachers' cognitive dimension of teaching (Borg, 2003; Santipolo, 2016), that is, what they think and feel about language, is crucial, because beliefs «are thought to serve as predictors of behaviors» (Bai, Ertmer, 2008: 95), and can shed light on teachers' school practices regarding language use (Coupland, Williams, Garret, 1994).

Teachers' cognitive dimension regards not only their language attitudes (i.e. what their opinions are with respect to a language), but also what they do believe about multilingualism and multilingual practices in the school. It has been shown that there is still little awareness about second language learning processes and how languages interact in the mind, and teachers still hold strong beliefs that a multilingual education could lead to confusion and delays in mastering the languages (De Angelis, 2011). However, research has shown that teachers do not have monolithic opinions about languages, and their views about non-standard varieties and dialects reveal a variety of beliefs about linguistic diversity (Godley *et al.*, 2006). These beliefs are often correlated with ethnicity and social characteristics of the respondents, so that, sometimes, minority teachers appear to have the most conservative views about mastering the variety of the language with more "linguistic capital" (Bourdieu, 1977), because they believe that adopting prevailing white, middle-class values is the most efficient way to gain success (Dee, Henkin, 2002; Bustos Flores, Smith, 2009). Furthermore, language teachers (and especially foreign language teachers) tend to show different language attitudes compared to teachers of non-linguistic subjects. The latter indeed could be potentially less aware of issues regarding language variation and language acquisition processes because they lack explicit pre-service teacher preparation programs that address issues related to linguistics, thus possibly showing negative attitudes toward multilingualism (Santipolo, 2016). Nevertheless, teachers of linguistic subjects and foreign language teachers could be more inclined to assign positive value to mastering different languages, but at the same time they could tend to show peculiar beliefs regarding the correct way of teaching – and speaking - of a language (Kagan, 1992; De Angelis, 2011). Thus, they could have positive orientation toward multilingualism, but at the same time they could still strongly be devoted to standard language ideology even concerning the second language teaching.

Breaking the connection between beliefs, attitudes and behaviour is difficult but not impossible, even though the relationship between beliefs and practice is not straightforward, and changes in the system of beliefs do not necessarily imply positive changes in teachers' everyday practices (August, Calderón, 2006; Zheng, 2013; Bhusal, 2020). Even if language ideologies reflect politics and power ideologies in general (Woolard, 1998), it appears that teachers' formal training and, especially, exposure to different languages tend to mitigate negative attitudes toward foreign accents, based on

the assumption that the respondents are more acquainted with linguistic diversity (Byrnes, Kiger, Manning, 1997). On the contrary, attitudes toward multilingual education appear to be directly correlated to school composition and exposure to different languages; different studies have indeed demonstrated that teachers from schools with high rates of students with an ethnic background tend to be less favourable to multilingual education practices, thus showing more monolingual beliefs (Agirdag, Van Avermaet, Van Houtte, 2013; Pulinx, Van Avermaet, Agirdag, 2015).

These findings appear to be somehow contradictory (linguistic and cultural diversity sometimes elicits positive attitudes and beliefs, and sometimes not) and – what is even more important – they originate mainly from English-speaking countries. In Italy an in-depth investigation of language attitudes and educational practices at large is still missing (studies devoted to accents have indeed, until today, only addressed the evaluation of regional and foreign accents through verbal or matched-guise techniques: Marotta, Boula de Mareüil, 2009; Calamai, 2015). Italy appears to be characterised by a strong monolingual national value system. The Italian school system has indeed always been involved in sanctioning the eradication of local dialects, considered a hindrance towards successful Italianization (Dal Negro, Vietti, 2011). Speaking a local dialect and not mastering the standard language is still considered a sign of poor education, and it is correlated with social stigma. Italian teachers tend to discredit local dialects and non-standard pronunciations in a way that sometimes prevents children from using their home-language (Guerini, 2011). Based on these assumptions, Italian speakers, and teachers in particular, will share these beliefs about language, that is, a strong positive assessment of standard language and pronunciation. Consequently, it is possible that exposure to Italian linguistic diversity will not reduce the standard language ideology, especially if we consider the lack of clear language policies (as discussed earlier), and that Italian school teachers receive a prescriptive training that, only recently, has been mitigated by the presence of linguistic subjects in their training curricula.

5. THE RESEARCH

In order to ascertain whether the Italian school system tends to exacerbate the differences between native and non-native students, we investigated the explicit attitudes of Italian teachers toward non-native Italian students' accented speech. The relationship – if any – between beliefs about accented speech and other aspects related to school practices, such as multicultural education or preference for monolingual classrooms, is explored in a particular context in order to verify whether what is found in an English-speaking context can be extended to other socio-geographical environments.

5.1. *The geographical setting*

The research presented here was conducted in three cities in Tuscany: Arezzo (AR), Florence (FI) and Prato (PO). Tuscany is the fourth Italian region by percentage of students with non-Italian citizenship[14] (13.4%). If we observe how, at the district level (It. 'province'), the presence of students with non-Italian citizenship impacts on the school system, we will notice that Prato has the highest percentage of non-Italian students in

[14] It should be remembered that students with non-Italian citizenship may have been born in Italy but can belong to families with immigrant backgrounds.

Italy, where the students with non-Italian citizenship represent 24.5% of the total school population. Table 1 shows the distribution of non-Italian students in the entire school system in Tuscany. Florence comes after Prato (15.3%), whereas Arezzo has 13.6% of non-Italian students, in line with the trend in other cities in the region.

Table 1. *Distribution (percentages) of students with non-Italian citizenship across the different school levels in Tuscany for the school year 2016-2017* (*source*: MIUR, 2018b: 64)

	Total	**Nursery school**	**Primary school**	**Middle school**	**High school**
Florence	15.3	17.1	16.4	15.6	12.8
Prato	24.5	27.2	28.3	27.3	16.2
Arezzo	13.6	14.4	14.9	14.2	11.7
Tuscany	13.4	14.7	14.7	14.0	10.9
Italy	9.4	10.7	10.8	9.7	7.1

Whereas in Florence non-Italian students follow the national trend in choosing vocational schools, in Prato and Arezzo the gap between different high school types is smaller (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Distribution (absolute values) of students with non-Italian citizenship by province for the different upper secondary school types for school year 2016-2017* (*source*: MIUR, 2018b: 66)

	Total	**It. alias 'licei'**	**Technical schools**	**Vocational schools**
Florence	5,435	1,483	1,691	2,261
Prato	1,742	577	640	525
Arezzo	1,884	597	562	725
Tuscany	17,333	4891	5674	6,767
Italy	191,663	53,240	71,877	66,546

Given this picture, the three selected cities appear to be aligned with the regional and national trend in some respects, whereas in other ways they show specific patterns.

5.2. *Research hypothesis*

The purpose of this paper is to offer an insight into Italian teachers' language attitudes, with the broader purpose of verifying if language ideology is directly correlated to educational practices and teachers' declared positive attitude toward multilingualism. Additionally, we want to verify the possible role of external factors (such as school composition or teachers' subjects) in mitigating or governing attitudes, in order to understand if changes in the school setting can lead to changes in beliefs, and consequently, in practices.

The following hypotheses are tested in the peculiar Italian setting, where migration is a recent phenomenon. We have asserted that the Italian school system encourages prescriptive behaviour tied to the promotion of the standard language. Thus, with respect

to language attitudes, we expect that:

1) Italian teachers will show similar attitudes, regardless of their exposure to linguistic diversity.
2) Italian teachers will show negative attitudes toward foreign accent, regardless of the subject they teach and the school level in which they teach.

Language ideologies are usually less subject to disapproval and social stigma: that is, evaluating a foreign accent negatively is more tolerable than evaluating a foreign student negatively, which is perceived as racist or intolerant (Ng, 2007). At the same time, it is easier to be 'multicultural' than 'multilingual'. Multilingualism is still viewed as a possible hindrance for the correct mastering of a language, whereas multiculturalism, with its vague definition, appears to be an established rhetorical concept that raises an opaque, general appreciation (Armillei, 2015). With respect to general ideologies regarding multilingualism and multiculturalism, we expect the following:

3) Teachers will show positive opinions toward a multicultural classroom, but they will be less tolerant toward multilingual practices, because they believe that it is more important to master the standard national language and because they believe that multilingualism could lead to confusion in mastering different languages (consistent with hypothesis 1).

We then predict that (4) the stance towards non-native accent is correlated to multilingualism and multiculturalism and appears to be a relevant litmus test in educational settings. Finally, we predict that (5) the lack of specific guidelines for managing multilingual and multicultural settings will cause teachers to have feelings of inadequacy.

5.3. *The sample*

As outlined above, we carried out the proposed research in Tuscany. The selected schools were involved in a community-based project concerning discrimination and stereotype awareness (ConcertAzioni project: www.scuolacitta.it) and several teachers were already informed about the research and issues regarding multilingualism and multiculturalism. Schools were selected in three cities with different rates of immigration:

- Prato (PO), the city with highest percentage in Italy of non-Italian students;
- Florence (FI), with the second highest percentage in Tuscany of students with non-Italian citizenship;
- Arezzo (AR), with a percentage that follows the national trend, but in which there is a smaller gap between different high school types (e.g. It. 'licei' vs. vocational schools).

The research was conducted in five secondary schools belonging to two different levels:

- lower secondary school: two in Florence (identified as A-1-FI and B-1-FI, respectively), one in Arezzo (C-1-AR);
- upper secondary school: one in Prato (D-2-PO), one in Florence (E-2-FI); for the upper secondary schools we also gave equal weight for the type of school, choosing one 'liceo' (It. 'Liceo scientifico' for D-2-PO) and one vocational school (It. 'Istituto tecnico e professionale' for E-2-FI).

The schools are characterized by different rates of non-native student populations, as

reported in the following list in decreasing order based on the presence of non-native students:

- E-2-FI: 51.5%
- A-1-FI: 49%
- C-1-AR: 45%
- B-1-FI: 40%
- D-2-PO: 19.4%

The schools are also characterised by different rates of ethnic background. According to teachers' declarations, in Arezzo the two most represented ethnic backgrounds appear to be Pakistani and Bengali, followed by Romanian; in Florence, Chinese is the largest group, followed by Romanian, Albanian, Moroccan and Filipino students, whereas in Prato the most largest is the Chinese one, followed by Albanian and Romanian students (Calamai, Nodari, Galatà, 2020).

Overall, we surveyed 144 teachers (113 females and 31 males). The participants' distribution by school level was as follows: 67 participants for the lower secondary school level (e.g.: A-1-FI = n. 18; B-1-FI = n. 19; C-1-AR = n. 30); 77 participants for the upper secondary school level (e.g.: D-2-PO = n. 29; E-2-FI = n. 48). We contacted teachers of different subjects; for the purposes of the analysis, the subjects taught by the teachers were reduced and grouped as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. *Subjects reduced to broader categories*

Responses	Grouping category	# count
Italian literature, Latin, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Geography	Humanities	42
English, Spanish, French, German	Languages	22
Mathematics, Physics, Informatics, Economics, Natural Sciences, Law & Economy	Sciences	44
Support teachers[15]	Support teachers	23
Technical and artistic drawing, Music, Gymnastics, NAs (no answers)	Others	13

All the teachers participated voluntarily and completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire described in the next paragraph.

5.4. *Methods and procedure*

After informing them of the purpose of the research and after obtaining their informed consent, the teachers were asked to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire, consisting of 4 sections each containing either open questions or a series of Likert-type

[15] Support teachers usually work with students with special education needs, be they learning, mental, emotional, or physical disabilities. The Italian school system establishes that support teachers are, in any case, classroom teachers; thus, even if their role is to assist specific students, they spend their working time in the classroom, sometimes helping other students who need support.

questions, was administered at school during the teachers' office hours. It took approximately 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire, and participants were allowed to skip responses if they wished. Each section was preceded by a short introductory text providing instructions on how to fill in the responses.

Section 1 was primarily devised to collect autobiographical information (e.g. age, subjects taught and the nationalities of students they have had in their classes since they started teaching as well as during the last year). Data gathered in this section was used to analyse the responses to the questionnaire according to different grouping variables.

The purpose of section 2 was to measure Socially Desirable Responding. It is known that people tend to show a positive image of themselves (Paulhus, 2002). This can be particularly true when people are faced with questionnaires that aim at investigating negative stereotypes or racist behaviour. In order to account for this, we used the short version of the *BIDR 6: Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding* (Paulhus, 1991) developed by Bobbio and Manganelli (2011). Teachers were asked to answer 16 questions on a 6-point Likert scale measuring self-deceptive enhancement (SDE, 8 items), and impression management (IM, 8 items). SDE is described as the unconscious tendency of giving answers with a positive bias, in order not to undermine self-esteem, whereas IM can be correlated to the concept of 'face' as illustrated by Goffman, that is, the social image people want to show in public during a particular contact (Goffman, 1967). For our purposes, a correlation between the acceptance of multiculturalism at school and the impression management score will demonstrate that teachers are influenced by the positive face they want to show; contrarily, an absence of correlation between these scores will demonstrate that the results are not biased by social desirability.

Section 3 represents the core of the questionnaire and contains a set of 27 Likert-type questions (ranging from 1 to 4, e.g. *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) in the form of statements tackling different aspects related to linguistic prejudice. For the preparation of this section we started from an initial pool of 41 questions devised by the authors by taking inspiration and borrowing from other questionnaires available in the literature (e.g. from Ura, Preston, Mearns, 2015; Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, Ghaviandam, 2012; ISTAT, 2016). In general, due to the specificity of our research project and the context in which we operate, some of the borrowed items have been modified and adapted to suit our domain of enquiry. In devising and possibly adapting the questions, we chose to avoid designating them with a specific ethnicity or accent, preferring more general expressions such as 'foreign accent', 'foreign student'. As mentioned, the participating schools were already involved in school initiatives about multilingual and multicultural education, and several teachers had already been enrolled in other perceptual experiments regarding foreign accent perception (Calamai, Ardolino, 2020). The initial set of questions was discussed and pre-tested with experts in the field (e.g. teachers) among the authors' personal contacts in order to assess *face validity*; the experts were asked to comment and state if, according to their experience and knowledge of the school environment, the questions were considered relevant and acceptable in their working context and if the questions addressed the domains or the concepts the questionnaire intended to measure. Based on the experts' comments and proposed changes to improve readability and clarity, the initial pool of questions was reviewed and reduced by removing troublesome and ambiguous items. This preliminary operation ensured the retained questions were appropriate and relevant to our objectives and to the targeted context and population.

Section 3 in its final and reduced form (see also Annex 1) consists of:

- Section 3a –*ideology* against foreign accent. This section consists of 10 items. Six questions were borrowed and adapted to the Italian context from Ura, Preston,

Mearns (2015); two questions were borrowed with adaptations from Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, Ghaviandam (2012); two questions were devised by the authors. The aim of this set of items was to address the teachers' opinions and beliefs against foreign accent at school; all the questions in this sub-section referred explicitly to foreign-accented speech. We expected higher scores of *ideology* to convey greater linguistic prejudice against foreign-accented speech.

- Section 3b – *multiculturalism* at school. The questions grouped in this block (n = 4) were borrowed mainly from the survey conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in 2015 on the integration of second-generation immigrants (ISTAT, 2016). We expect that teachers scoring higher in this block of questions consider and judge multiculturalism at school positively.
- Section 3c – *multilingual education* at school. To address the teachers' beliefs about a *multilingual education* at school another block of questions (n = 5) was compiled. Two items were borrowed and adapted from Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, Ghaviandam (2012) and the remaining ones (n = 3) were specifically devised by the authors. Some of the questions were negatively scored and were reverse coded before running the analyses. We expected participants scoring higher in this section to favour a multilingual education at school.

In addition to the 3-factor group of items (or subscales), a final set of items (n = 8, forming Section 3d) was borrowed from the aforementioned ISTAT (2015) survey for comparability purposes when feasible.[16] These items address the teachers' teaching strategies in a multicultural class, the perception of the adequacy of their preparation as well as of the school system that a multicultural class imposes, and the teachers' perceived level of integration of foreign students in their classes.

In section 4 teachers were asked to identify the two most numerous ethnic groups in their classrooms and to rate the two groups on scales of competence, warmth, status, and competition (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, 2006; Cuddy *et al.*, 2009) following the Italian adaptation by Durante and Volpato (2008). An analysis and discussion of the responses to this section can be found in Calamai, Nodari, Galatà (2020).

At the end of the questionnaire the participants were given the opportunity to provide some feedback in the form of comments, suggestions or critiques (partially discussed in Calamai, Nodari, Galatà 2020).

5.5. *Statistical analysis*

Data preparation, analysis and visualization have been carried out in *R* (The R Core Team 2019). Missing data inspection for the questions in sections 2 and 3 was investigated and quantified in 1% by means of the *Amelia* package (Honaker, King, Blackwell 2011) and imputed with the *mice* package (van Buuren, Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011). Item analysis and scoring was carried out through the *Likert* package (Bryer, Speerschneider, 2016); for each block of questions where appropriate, we calculated a multi-item score (after reverse-coding where needed) and performed an analysis to verify the internal consistency of the resulting scale: scales were considered acceptable if they showed a Cronbach alpha value close to .7 or above. Construct validity for sections 3a, 3b and 3c

[16] It should be kept in mind, however, that in the ISTAT 2015 survey devoted to the teaching staff only teachers of Italian and Mathematics were included.

of the questionnaire was assessed by investigating internal convergent and discriminant validity (two subtypes of construct validity) via the computation of scale-dimension correlations[17] (e.g. inter-item correlations and item-total score correlations among the items of the scales). To this end we used the *mtmm* function from the *psy* R package (Falissard, 2012a) as described in Falissard (2012b) which represents a procedure inspired by the multitrait-multimethods matrix (MTMM; Campbell, Fiske 1959).

After checking for homogeneity of variance (Levene's test), we then conducted separate one-way ANOVAs for each block as appropriate to compare the effects of *city* (Arezzo vs Florence vs Prato), *school level* (lower vs upper secondary schools) and *teachers' subjects* (Humanities vs Language vs Sciences vs Support teachers vs Others) on the scores of the three different blocks. Q-Q plots for the residuals were used as well to evaluate normal distribution. We furthermore ran Pearson correlation tests between the three blocks (Section 3a, 3b, and 3c) and the results of the Socially Desirable Responding scale (e.g. SDE and IM).

Finally, we present and discuss the results for the set of questions as described in Section 3d above and related to the teaching strategies and the teachers' preparation in the light of similar data available in the ISTAT 2015 survey.

We will now move to the presentation of the results stemming from the analyses carried out on the responses gathered from the teachers who took part in our research, leaving a more in-depth interpretation of the findings to the 'Discussion' section.

6. RESULTS

6.1. *Construct validity*

Firstly, we provide support for construct validity by investigating convergent and discriminant validity using the simplified approach proposed by Falissard (2012a, 2012b). As for discriminant validity, item-total correlations are higher when the items belong to its predefined subscale: in grey, the items belong to the subscale; in white, the items belong to another subscale (Figure 1). Grey boxes are clearly above white boxes thus confirming a good differentiation between the scales and therefore satisfying discriminant validity. Convergent validity can also be considered acceptable (Figure 2): the different items correlate better with other items from the same subscale (grey boxes are above white boxes). In other words, the mean correlation among the items of the same scale or dimension (convergent correlation) is greater than the mean correlation among the items of the other dimensions or scales (discriminant correlation): the proposed a priori grouping of items into three scales can be considered valid and supported by the data.

[17] In order for the subscales to be consistent, for convergent validity «the inter-item correlations of items from the same dimension should be higher than the inter-item correlations of items from different dimensions»; for discriminant validity «the correlation between any one item and the total score of the subscale to which it belongs should be higher than the correlation between the same item and the total score of another subscale» (cf. Falissard, 2012b: 181).

Figure 1. *Corrected item-total correlations for scores of ideology toward foreign accent, multiculturalism at school and multilingual education at school computed via the* mtmm *function in* R

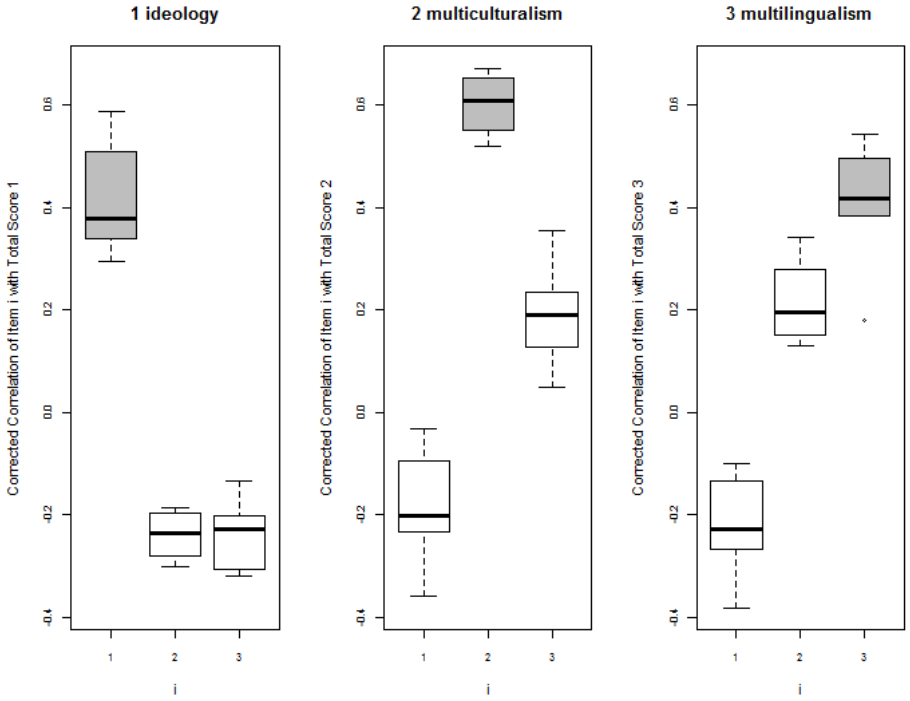
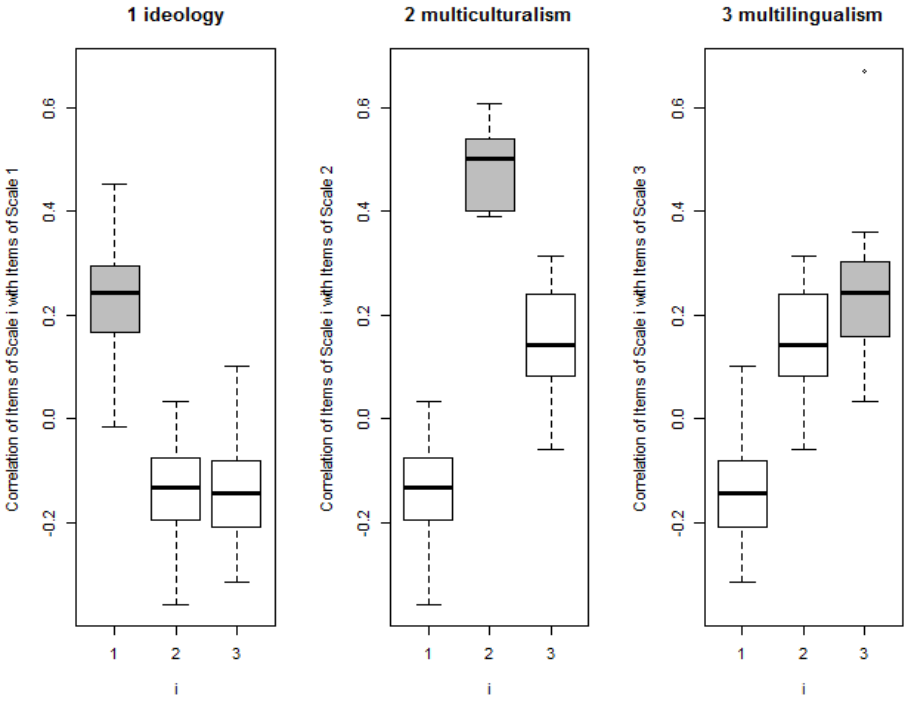


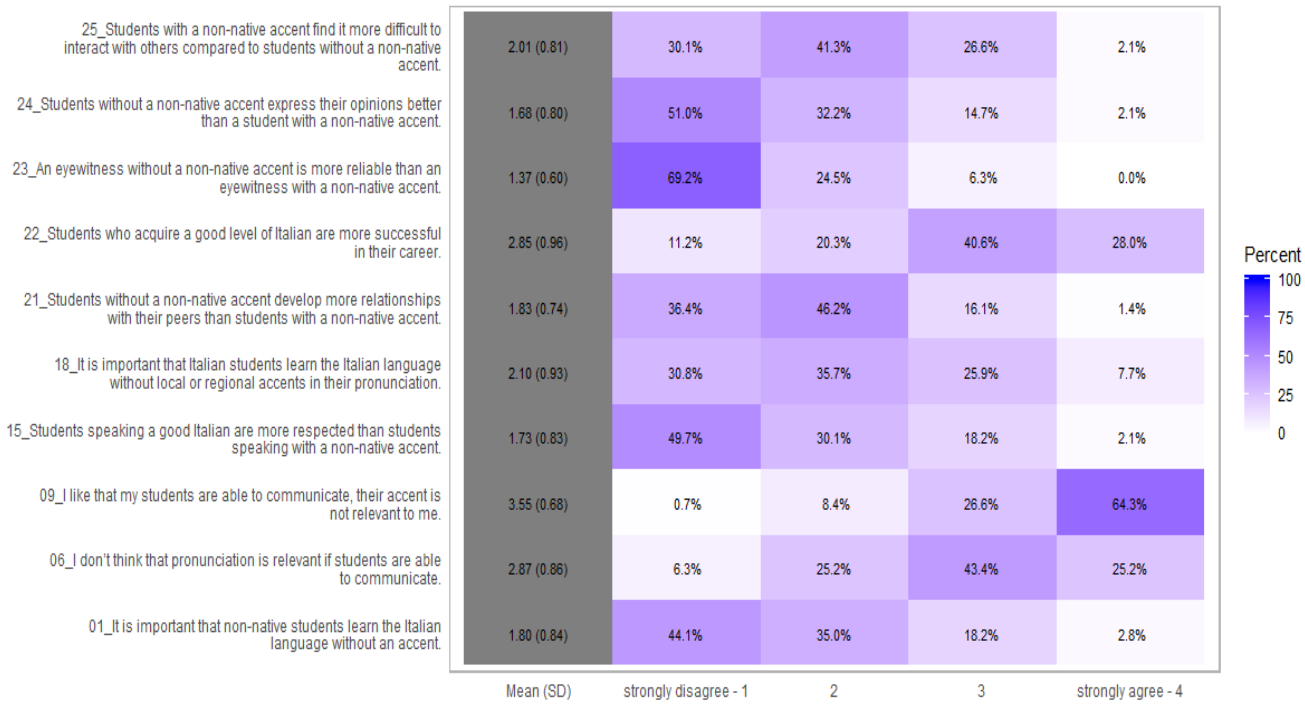
Figure 2. *Distribution of inter-item correlations for items belonging to ideology toward foreign accent, multiculturalism at school and multilingual education at school computed via the* mtmm *function in* R



6.2. *Ideology against foreign accent (Hypotheses 1 and 2)*

The first group of questions (e.g. Section 3a) was devoted to the teachers' ideology toward foreign accent. The heatmap in Figure 3 provides an overview of the distribution of the given responses for the whole sample.

Figure 3. *Heatmap representation (with mean score, standard deviation and percentage) of the responses to the Likert questions in Questionnaire Section 3a*



We verified the internal consistency of the scale, which gave a Cronbach alpha of .76. The maximum score (40) is to be interpreted as greater linguistic prejudice against a foreign accent, whereas the minimum obtainable score is 10. Results show that Tuscan teachers are in-between in their overt opinion toward foreign-accented speech, with a slight negative attitude (mean = 18.9, min = 10, max = 31, s.d. = 4.6). As expected, the ANOVA showed no statistically significant differences between cities ($F(2,140) = 2.170$, $p = .120$), school levels ($F(1,141) = 0.1$, $p = .750$) or teachers' subjects ($F(4,138) = 0.240$, $p = .920$). Mean and standard deviation values for each factor and level are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. *Multi-item scores (mean and standard deviation) for ideology, multicultural education and multilingual education grouped according to targeted cities, school levels and teachers' subjects*

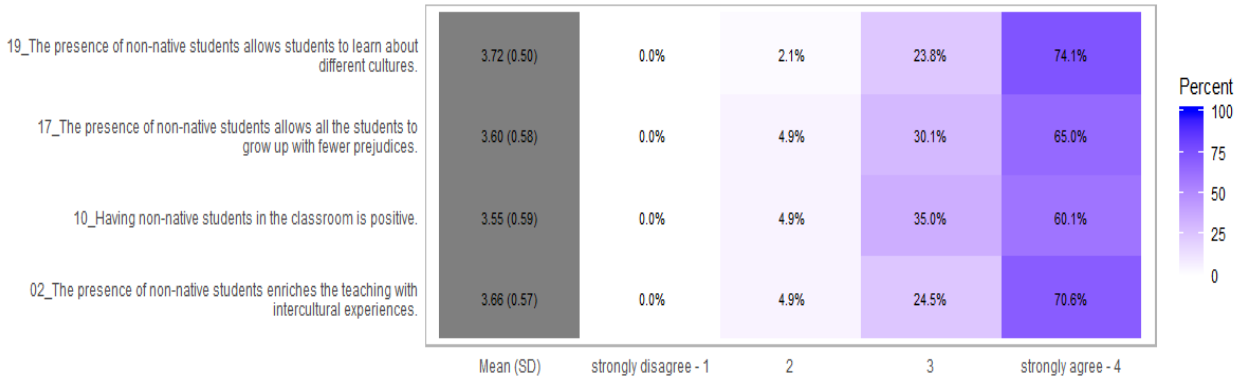
Factor	**Factor levels**	**Overt ideology**	**Multicultural education**	**Multilingual education**
Cities	Arezzo	20.5 (5.38)	14.0 (2.04)	12.7 (3.37)
	Florence	18.6 (4.52)	14.7 (1.74)	14.1 (3.06)
	Prato	18.3 (3.43)	14.6 (1.40)	14.2 (2.49)

Factor	Factor levels	Overt ideology	Multicultural education	Multilingual education
School levels	Lower secondary school	19.1 (4.68)	14.4 (1.98)	13.8 (3.41)
	Upper secondary school	18.8 (4.47)	14.6 (1.55)	13.8 (2.73)
Teachers' subjects	Humanities	19.0 (4.73)	14.8 (1.32)	14.2 (3.06)
	Languages	19.5 (4.88)	14.9 (1.43)	14.4 (2.87)
	Sciences	18.6 (4.53)	14.3 (1.81)	13.0 (3.40)
	Support	18.6 (4.08)	14.3 (2.34)	14.3 (3.79)
	Other	19.6 (4.82)	14.2 (2.03)	13.8 (2.66)

6.3. *Multicultural and multilingual education (Hypothesis 3)*

The second group of questions (e.g. Section 3b) was devoted to the teachers' opinions toward multiculturalism at school (Cronbach alpha = .79). An overview of the distribution for the responses given by the teachers is provided in Figure 4.

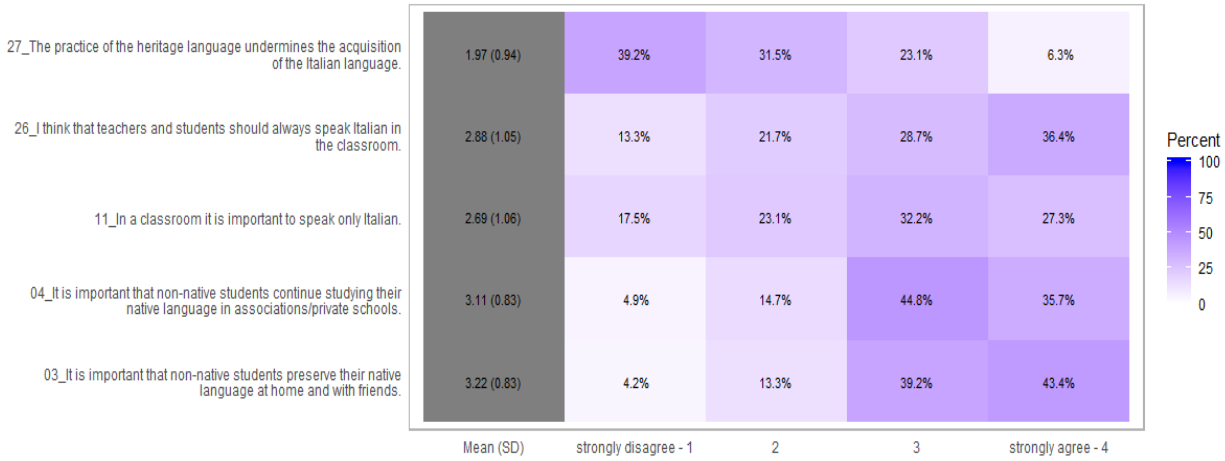
Figure 4. *Heatmap representation (with mean score, standard deviation and percentage) of the responses to the Likert items in Section 3b*



The maximum score (16) is to be interpreted as an approval and a positive opinion toward multiculturalism at school, whereas the opposite holds true for the minimum obtainable score, which is 4. Results show that the Tuscan teachers view multiculturalism at school positively (mean = 14.5, min = 8, max = 16, s.d. = 1.8). Again, the ANOVA showed no statistically significant differences between cities ($F(2,140) = 1.950$, $p = .150$), school levels ($F(1,141) = 0.290$, $p = .590$) or teachers' subjects ($F(4,138) = 1.140$, $p = .340$), as observed by the results (mean and s.d.) reported in Table 4.

The third section of questions (e.g. Section 3c) was devoted to the teachers' opinions toward multilingual education at school (Cronbach alpha = .65). An overview of the responses given by the teachers is provided in the heatmap in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Heatmap representation (with mean score, standard deviation and percentage) of the responses to the Likert items in Section 3c*



The maximum score (20) is to be interpreted as a positive opinion toward a multilingual education at school, whereas the opposite holds true for the minimum obtainable score, that is, 5. Results show that, as for ideology toward foreign accent, the Tuscan teachers fall in-between, with a slightly positive score for multilingual education (mean = 13.8, min = 5, max = 20, s.d. = 3.1). The ANOVA showed no statistically significant difference between cities ($F(2,140) = 2.340$, $p = .100$), school levels ($F(1,141) = 0$, p = n.s.) or teachers' subjects ($F(4,138) = 1.125$, $p = .290$), as observed by the results (mean and s.d.) reported in Table 4 above.

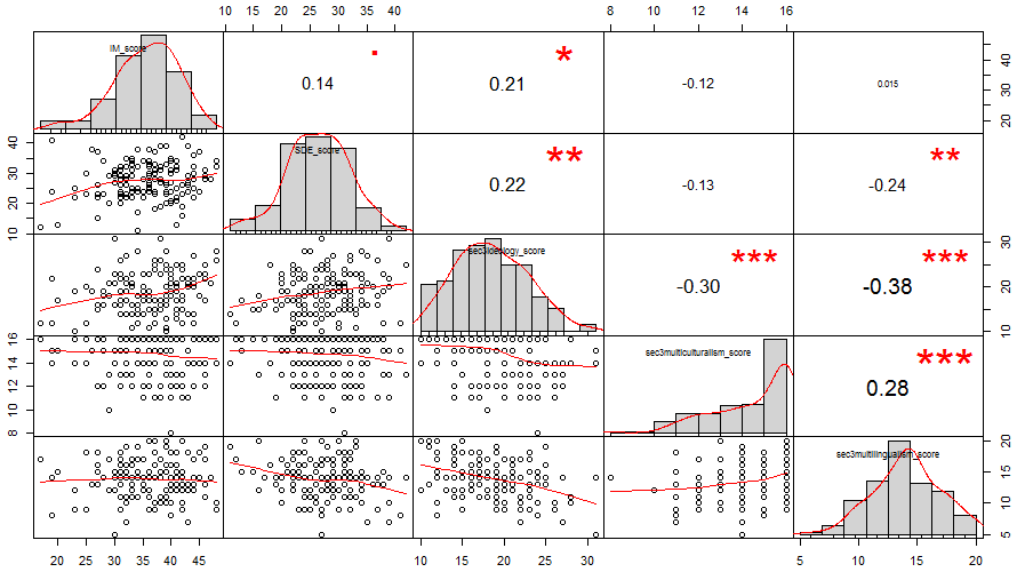
6.4. *Correlation between scores (Hypothesis 4)*

After the analysis of the scores of the three different blocks in section 3 of the questionnaire, Pearson correlation tests were performed to verify the presence of potential correlations between the different scores. The correlations for the three questionnaire scores from section 3 were all significant (see Figure 6). In particular, a significant negative correlation was found between ideology toward foreign accent and a positive opinion toward the multicultural classroom ($r = -0.30$, $p < .001$). Because higher scores on the ideology section mean negative attitudes toward a foreign accent, this means that the worse the opinion toward foreign-accented speech is, the less the teacher will encourage multiculturalism at school.

The same holds true for the negative correlation between ideology toward foreign-accented speech and a positive opinion toward a multilingual education ($r = -0.38$, $p < .001$; see Figure 6); teachers showing negative attitudes toward foreign-accented speech will not promote a multilingual education.

Finally, a significant positive correlation between multiculturalism at school and multilingual education was found ($r = 0.28$, $p < .001$; see Figure 6); higher scores, meaning positive opinions toward a multicultural environment, are directly tied to a positive attitude for a multilingual education (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. *Pearson correlations and significance levels for the different multi-items scores. From top left to bottom right: IM score, SDE score, overt ideology score, multicultural education score, multilingual education score*



The same holds true for the negative correlation between ideology toward foreign-accented speech and a positive opinion toward a multilingual education (r = -0.38, p < .001; see Figure 6); teachers showing negative attitudes toward foreign-accented speech will not promote a multilingual education.

Finally, a significant positive correlation between multiculturalism at school and multilingual education was found (r = 0.28, p < .001; see Figure 6); higher scores, meaning positive opinions toward a multicultural environment, are directly tied to a positive attitude for a multilingual education (see Figure 6).

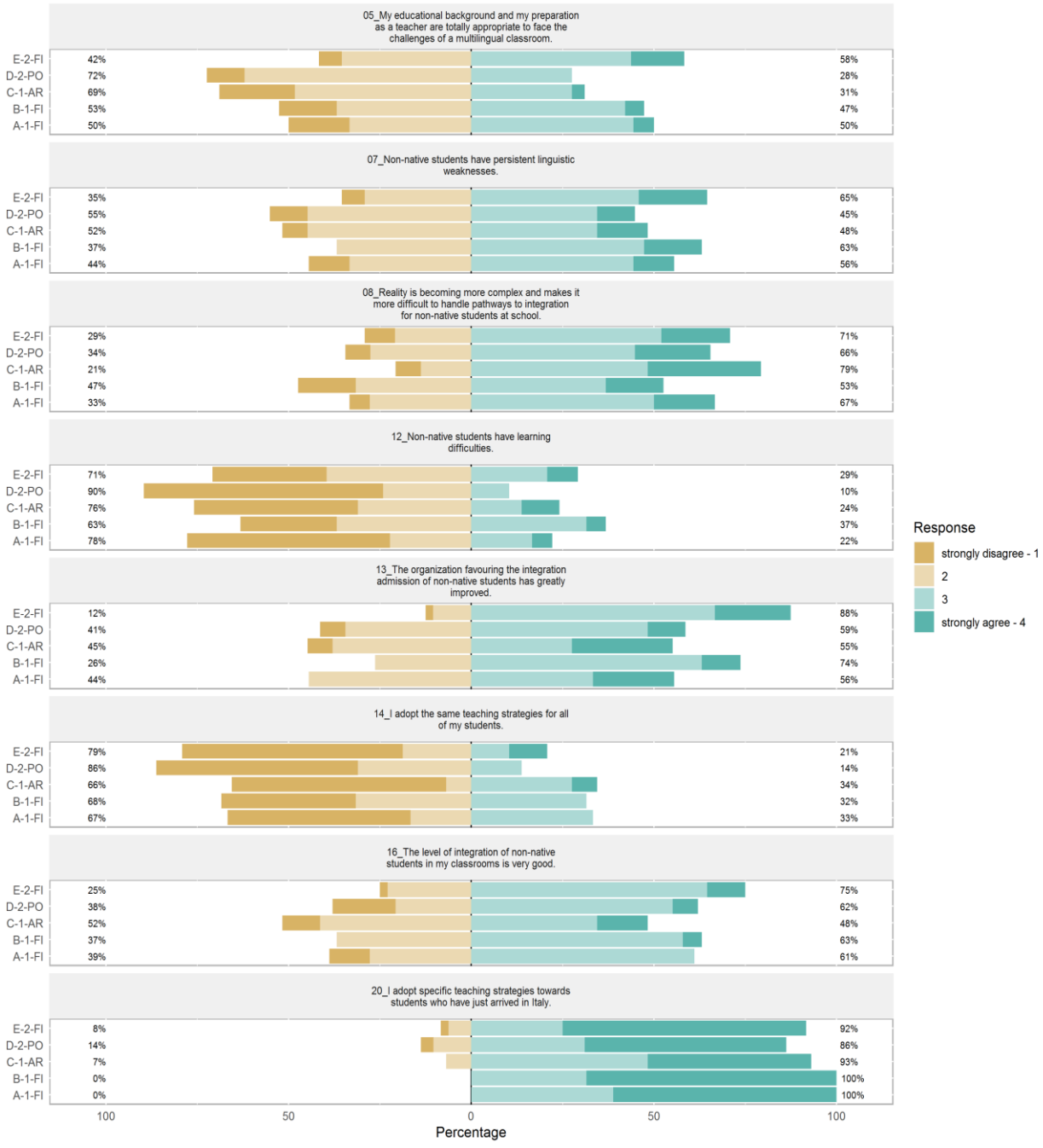
Moreover, we wanted to verify to what extent the scores for the three blocks of section 3 of the questionnaire were correlated with the two measures belonging to section 2 of the questionnaire, that is impression management (IM) and self-deceptive enhancement (SDE). We wanted to verify if these scores, in particular approval of multiculturalism at school, could be directly correlated to IM, given that teachers could answer the questionnaire in a way that prevented them from appearing racist or prejudiced. A significant and positive correlation was found for IM with ideology (r = 0.21, p = .012; see Figure 6), whereas the answers teachers gave relating to the encouragement of a multilingual and multicultural school setting were not correlated with their desire to show a positive face. For SDE scores, the results are more varied. A positive correlation was found between SDE and ideology (r = 0.22, p = .009; see Figure 6), but not for the approval of multiculturalism. In this last case however, the correlation was significant for only the lower secondary school from Arezzo (e.g. C-1-AR; r = -0.39, p = .038). In particular, a high score signalling an approval of multicultural schools was inversely correlated with high self-deceptive enhancement. It seems that teachers from the C-1-AR school tend to give more nuanced answers regarding multiculturalism when they wished to preserve their self-esteem.

Besides, the correlation between SDE and multilingualism at school was, overall, significant (r = -0.24, p = .005; see Figure 6). Again, this correlation seems to be particularly related to the teachers of one of the two upper secondary schools from Florence (e.g. E-2-FI). Whereas for the other teachers the correlation is not significant, the teachers from school E-2-FI show a negative correlation between encouragement of multilingualism and SDE scores (r = -0.33, p = .021).

6.5. *Feeling of adequacy, teachers' preparation and common beliefs (Hypothesis 5)*

In Section 3d, a set of three questions (n. 5, 14 and 20) was devoted to the preparation and the training of Italian school teachers; two questions (n. 8 and 13) in the same section tackled the teachers' perception of the school system's adequacy in facing the needs and issues that a multicultural class imposes; two questions asked about difficulties and weaknesses attributed to non-native students (n. 7 and 12) and one last question (n. 16) asked the teachers about the integration of non-native students in their classrooms. We will discuss these questions individually, in order to have a clearer picture of teachers' opinions and compare our results with those from the ISTAT (2015) survey where feasible. A summary by school for the questions in this section is provided in Figure 7.

Figure 7. *Likert plot analysis by school for the questions in Section 3d of the questionnaire*



On a scale from 1 to 4, Tuscan teachers declared they felt moderately prepared to face a multilingual classroom (see question n. 5 in Figure 7), with a mean score of 2.4 (s.d. = 0.8). Whereas three schools' scores were quite similar, teachers from one school in Florence (e.g. E-2-FI) were slightly more confident toward their training and preparation (mean = 2.7, s.d. = 0.8). A direct comparison of the questions n. 14 and n. 20 showed that teachers tend to adapt their strategies, in particular when they have to deal with students newly arrived in Italy.

The score on question 5 is strongly tied with what emerged from the answer to question 8 (e.g. "Reality is becoming more complex and makes it more difficult to handle pathways to integration for non-native students at school."), where teachers' scores reached a mean of 2.8, on a scale from 1 to 4 (s.d. = 0.9). Only one lower secondary school from Arezzo (C-1-AR) seemed to show noticeable preoccupation for the current situation, with a mean score of 3.0 (s.d. = 0.9). A mean score of 2.9 (s.d. = 0.8) was found for question 13 (e.g. "The organization favouring the integration of non-native students has greatly improved."). Note that the same teachers from the upper secondary school from Florence (E-2-FI) who declared they felt more confident also noticed a consistently improved organization for foreign students' integration (mean = 3.1, s.d. = 0.6).

Questions n. 7 and n. 12 are somehow reassuring. If the perception about persistent linguistic weaknesses in non-native students (e.g. question n. 7) is commonly and obviously an issue for various reasons (mean score of 2.6, s.d. = 0.8, e.g. 56% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement)[18], a high proportion of teachers in our sample disagrees or strongly disagrees with the attribution of learning difficulties to non-native students (see question n. 12 in Figure 7) with a mean percentage of 75% (ranging between 63 and 90%). Our data shows a reversed tendency with respect to what has been recorded by the ISTAT survey where 69.9% of the teachers state that non-native students sometimes/frequently have learning difficulties (see ISTAT 2016: 14).

Finally, when it comes to question n. 16 "The level of integration of non-native students in my classrooms is very good", the teachers' perception is more on the positive side with a mean score of 2.6 (s.d. = 0.7): 64% of the teachers agree or strongly agree with this statement (a percentage that is very close to the 70.7% registered in the ISTAT 2015 survey; see ISTAT 2016: 13).

7. Discussion

The results presented offer a complex picture of the relationship between language ideologies, school practices and multilingual education. First of all, it is worth noting that the teachers reacted differently to the three constructs (ideology, multiculturalism and multilingualism). While the promotion of a multicultural school offered clear-cut albeit polarized answers, the questions relating to foreign accent and multilingualism showed a more nuanced picture. In particular, the most negative scores were related to attitudes toward foreign accent, and this result did not vary across cities, subjects, or school levels. Even though we did not find groups of answers with polarized negative opinions toward foreign accent and multilingualism, we noted a slightly positive attitude toward multicultural education. Thus, even if teachers were unanimous in appreciating multiculturalism as a positive element for the school environment, the same awareness was not present for multilingual education and for the promotion of LX and foreign

[18] The proportion of teachers in the ISTAT survey is however much higher: 84% of them state that non-native students sometimes/frequently have persistent linguistic weaknesses (see ISTAT, 2016: 14).

accents. As discussed before, this confirms that discrimination against non-standard (and foreign) accents is more subtle compared to discrimination against gender or ethnicity. Hence, unlike other forms of discrimination, which normally are accessed through implicit and indirect techniques (such as the Implicit Association Test, Pantos, Perkins, 2012), discrimination against foreign-accented speech can surface in more explicit tasks, such as in answering a paper and pencil questionnaire. It appears that the negative evaluation of non-standard and non-native accents is not perceived as a matter of prejudice or racism (Ng, 2007). For this reason, people will not mask their opinion toward non-standard accents, and these attitudes will be recorded even with the use of overt techniques. Speaking with an accent is normally considered a reversible trait that speakers can control. Thus, speaking with an accent appears to be a willing desire to be tied to a stigmatized identity (Weiner, Perry, Magnusson, 1988), a lack of effort by the speaker who persists in maintaining a pronunciation that may even undermine his or her ability to be understood, causing, in the end, feelings of annoyance (Ryan, 1983).

In addition, we must also stress the lack of correlation between the three blocks of the questionnaire and the impression management scores (IM). This means that the results are not biased. Thus, and in parallel with the slightly negative attitudes toward foreign-accented speech, the promotion of multiculturalism is not correlated with teachers' willingness to appear socially desirable, rather, these results reflect their real attitudes toward multiculturalism. It is possible that the vagueness of the multicultural pedagogy in the Italian school system allows for collecting positive evaluations. Italian teachers deal daily with intercultural protocol and activities, but under this generic term fall different practices. Copious official documents mention the need for a real intercultural education[19] but, again, MIUR documents on interculturalism offer only very general instructions and some basic principles. As reported by scholars and researchers, as in the case of multilingualism, a multicultural approach in Italy over the past few decades has been vaguely conceived of and poorly executed (Armillei, 2015). This means that even those people who could not embrace a sincere multicultural perspective can declare they still approve of multiculturalism in education, because of the opaqueness of the term itself in the Italian school system. Additionally, this result confirms that, in accordance with Oppenheim (1992), the social desirability bias tends to surface in more public and non-anonymous situations, like focus groups and interviews, rather than in questionnaires.

As for multilingualism, the results confirm that, even if there is a tendency for a positive stance, this topic still does not reach a full consensus (as already attested for other European teachers who show mixed feelings toward bilingualism and the maintaining of heritage languages, e.g. Gkaintartzi, Kiliari, Tsokalidou, 2015). As stated in the first paragraph, this is due to the fact that the Italian school system is closely tied to the standard language ideology, which has oriented the Italian school system since National Unity (De Mauro, 1970; Guerini, 2011). In addition, Italian teachers are oriented in their teaching activities by a monolingual ideology, that is, giving instructions in the target language, inhibiting the translation between first and second language, and, most importantly, the separation of the two linguistic systems (Cummins, 2007). Strikingly, the results do not vary across teachers' subjects, and even foreign language teachers show the same opinions regarding a multilingual education (cf. the section on *Language attitudes and teachers' beliefs*). Such results might be related to teachers' ethnic backgrounds. In our sample, foreign language teachers are, nonetheless, Italian native speakers. Thus, they possibly do not feel the need to favour the raising of a real multilingual environment,

[19] The Italian school system currently adopts the term interculturalism, a series of pedagogical approaches that are considered the most appropriate strategy for dealing with immigration and cultural diversity.

because they are firmly tied to a strong monolingual national value system. Furthermore, even if Italian guidelines favour the development of a multicultural and multilingual environment, the lack of norms, didactic support and formal training for teachers is perhaps one of the causes for the poor achievement of a real multilingual education.

This observation is corroborated by the exploration of teachers' feelings about their preparation and competences for the management of a superdiverse school setting. The score related to adequacy confirms that, for many teachers, their preparation is still not sufficient, and would benefit from specific programs devoted to the new multicultural school settings. Noticeably, only the school with the lowest rate of students with non-Italian citizenship (see *The sample*) acts differently when looking at teachers' opinions toward a multilingual education at school. Teachers from this school are also the ones who declare that they adapt their teaching strategies more frequently. This positive opinion could be possibly the direct consequence of a different context, in which teachers do not really deal with linguistic diversity in their teaching activities; additionally, teachers from schools with a homogeneous non-ethnic background could be the ones who do not feel that the standard language is under threat, whereas teachers from other schools with high rates of linguistic diversity could experience feelings of inadequacy because they might not have the sufficient plurilingual competencies (Pulinx, Van Avermaet, Agirdag, 2015).

It is important to stress the limits that a research like this has. First, asking teachers to answer a questionnaire about language ideologies and multiculturalism can sometimes raise feelings of suspicion. Another problematic aspect regards the selection of the sample. Our research was made possible by the willingness of the teachers who took part in it on a voluntary basis. We can thus assume that the teachers who agreed to sacrifice their spare time to participate in a research project devoted to foreign students are, in a certain way, those who are more sensitive to issues concerning integration, multiculturalism and multilingualism. The length of the questionnaire itself, filled out during the teachers' spare time in their scholastic daily routine, sometimes puzzled the teachers, making them feel judged by linguists in their daily job. Additionally, the questionnaire was viewed as not allowing for nuances. Teachers usually reported that for some questions it was impossible to offer a single answer on a Likert-point scale, because this method tended to obfuscate the complex scholastic reality that they were faced with every day. The use of psychometric techniques in constructing a questionnaire (Likert-scale questions, Robust estimation of Cronbach's alpha), although guaranteeing reliable statistical results, seems to have many limitations, especially if we want these results to be useful for the teachers. Therefore, even if the collection of a paper-and-pencil questionnaire has allowed us to gather a robust number of statistically significant answers in a relatively short amount of time, this research needs to be backed by other techniques. In the future, focus groups will be conducted in order to show stances toward sociocultural objects and to gather the positioning of social actors (i.e. teachers) toward systems of beliefs. Focus groups and interviews will also help in explaining those results which still need an adequate interpretation, such as the inverse relationship between self-deceptive enhancement, and multiculturalism and multilingualism appreciation. Additionally, we hope to address other points that will reinforce our analysis concerning Italian school teachers' language attitudes. In particular, efforts will be expended to verify if language attitudes and everyday linguistic practices converge. It has been shown, for example, that the appreciation of the standard language and speaking the standard language sometimes do not converge; additionally, even when people declare they embrace prescriptive behaviours, the norms to penalise nonstandard accent are not put into places (see, for example, Nair-Venugopal, 2013).

8. Conclusion

In light of our exploratory survey, it seems that, today, the Italian school system tends to exacerbate the differences between native and non-native students. The gap in school success between Italian and non-Italian students might, possibly, be an indirect consequence of the lack of clear policies and planning devoted to the integration of immigrant children, because, as reported previously (see *Italian educational system, migration and language policies*), the documents provided by the Ministry of Education are to be considered suggestions, rather than real specific protocols for language education planning. Given that the positive examples of integration and multilingualism practices seem to be related to the private initiative of the teachers, and that language attitudes are the consequences of the ideological bases of teachers' interventions in the use of language at school, it is important to stress that the explicit attitudes of Italian teachers toward non-native Italian students' accented speech are directly related to other aspects dealing with school practices, such as multicultural and multilingual education. Nevertheless, teachers' beliefs are strictly correlated in such a way that opinions toward accent can predict opinions toward multilingualism and multiculturalism. We find this result particularly important, because it demonstrates that even more theoretical stances, like the attitudes toward accent, directly affect other aspects of the teachers' lives. Investigating language attitudes can thus shed light on more general aspects of school education, and a greater awareness toward linguistic prejudice can help teachers in guiding their teaching activities.

Our results, as expected, did not vary between cities, school levels or teachers. The same standard-language ideology is found, in a homogenous way, in the sample under investigation. Unlike the results found in the literature (see for example Byrnes, Kiger, Manning, 1997; Blake, Cutler, 2003), it appears that different exposure to language diversity did not affect the overt opinions and attitudes of the teachers. From this perspective, the outcomes found in English-speaking countries contexts should not be extended to other sociolinguistic contexts.

Considered as a whole, these results could be a demonstration that language ideologies toward foreign-accented speech are strongly pervasive, because they reflect, as Irvine (1989: 255) states, «the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests». This interpretation is reinforced by the observation that even those teachers (i.e. foreign language teachers) who should be more familiar and 'open' to foreign accents prefer standard, non-accented pronunciation. This confirms previous research in showing that standard language ideology applies even in the context of foreign language teaching, in which strong beliefs about the correct pronunciation and the native-like speaker paradigm still persist (De Angelis, 2011). Again, the valorisation of speaking with unaccented speech, probably boosted by social stigma toward local accents and regional pronunciations (Calamai, 2015), seems to be rooted in a more general ideology, and is not related to the personal experience of teachers or to their curricula. It is possibly only with «a critical interdisciplinary dialogue between educators and sociolinguists» (Alim, 2005: 25) that teachers will become aware of the importance of embracing new language ideologies that will be fully inclusive and that can reflect the real dynamics of a multicultural society, thus recognizing their political role of teaching in promoting social changes (Cochran-Smith, 1995: 494). In doing this, teachers will probably be able to commit to multilingual pedagogy, viewing the ability of translanguaging as a useful asset with the opportunity for crossing among different sociolinguistic identities, instead of viewing it as a liability (Garcia, Wei, 2013; De Costa, 2020). Shedding light on this pervasiveness of negative attitudes toward foreign and non-standard accents seems thus to be of particular

importance, especially for teachers, so that they can more clearly understand the subtle mechanisms fostering discrimination.

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APPENDIX

English translation of the statements included in section 3 of the overt questionnaire administered to the teachers and used for the present research.

Questionnaire section	Item	Question	Adapted from
3a	1	It is important that non-native students learn the Italian language without an accent.	Devised by the authors
3a	6	I don't think that pronunciation is relevant if students are able to communicate.*	Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, Ghaviandam (2012)
3a	9	I like the fact that my students are able to communicate, their accent is not relevant to me.*	Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, Ghaviandam (2012)
3a	15	Students speaking a good Italian are more respected than students speaking with a non-native accent.	Ura, Preston, Mearns (2015)
3a	18	It is important that Italian students learn the Italian language without local or regional accents in their pronunciation.	Devised by the authors

3a	21	Students without a non-native accent develop more relationships with their peers than students with a non-native accent.	Ura, Preston, Mearns (2015)
3a	22	Students who acquire a good level of Italian are more successful in their career.	Ura, Preston, Mearns (2015)
3a	23	An eyewitness without a non-native accent is more reliable than an eyewitness with a non-native accent.	Ura, Preston, Mearns (2015)
3a	24	Students without a non-native accent express their opinions better than a student with a non-native accent.	Ura, Preston, Mearns (2015)
3a	25	Students with a non-native accent find it more difficult to interact with others compared to students without a non-native accent.	Ura, Preston, Mearns (2015)
3b	2	The presence of non-native students enriches the teaching with intercultural experiences.	ISTAT (2016)
3b	10	Having non-native students in the classroom is positive.	Devised by the authors
3b	17	The presence of non-native students allows all the students to grow up with fewer prejudices.	ISTAT (2016)
3b	19	The presence of non-native students allows students to learn about different cultures.	ISTAT (2016)
3c	3	It is important that non-native students preserve their native language at home and with friends.	Devised by the authors
3c	4	It is important that non-native students continue studying their native language in associations/private schools.	Devised by the authors
3c	11	In a classroom it is important to speak only Italian.*	Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, Ghaviandam (2012)
3c	26	I think that teachers and students should always speak Italian in the classroom. *	Pishghadam, Baghaei, Bazri, Ghaviandam (2012)
3c	27	The practice of the heritage language undermines the acquisition of the Italian language.*	Devised by the authors
3d	5	My educational background and my preparation as a teacher are totally appropriate to face the challenges of a multilingual classroom.	Devised by the authors
3d	7	Non-native students have persistent linguistic weaknesses.	ISTAT (2016)

3d	8	Reality is becoming more complex and makes it more difficult to handle pathways to integration for non-native students at school.	ISTAT (2016)
3d	12	Non-native students have learning difficulties.	ISTAT (2016)
3d	13	The organization favoring the integration of non-native students has greatly improved.	ISTAT (2016)
3d	14	I adopt the same teaching strategies for all of my students.	ISTAT (2016)
3d	16	The level of integration of non-native students in my classrooms is very good.	ISTAT (2016)
3d	20	I adopt specific teaching strategies towards students who have just arrived in Italy.	ISTAT (2016)
		Notes: Questions marked by an asterisk (*) have been reverse-coded before computing multi-item scores and running their statistical analysis. 3a = *ideology* toward foreign accent; 3b = *multiculturalism* at school; 3c = *multilingual education* at school; 3d = questions borrowed from the ISTAT 2015 survey (ISTAT 2016).	